

DPW UPDATE

February 2002

Trash to Energy—Dream to Reality

Turning decomposed trash into electric energy was a dream for San Diego County for years. Now it's a reality thanks to efforts of DPW's Solid Waste Management section.

Methane gas at the Jamacha Landfill is now generating some 300 kilowatts of electricity, enough to provide service to 300 homes according to Margaret Bézy.

"Our system went on line in June and we're using methane to turn micro turbines to generate power," she said. "There's enough gas generated by buried and decomposing solid waste to provide electricity for the next 20-25 years."

Here's how the system works: Decomposing trash creates methane gas that is pumped through a web of pipes to a central processing facility on site. In the past, that non-polluting gas was burned and escaped through a stack into the atmosphere. Now, a system of micro turbines is installed and gas turns those turbines to generate electricity that is sold to San Diego Gas & Electric and sent to the countywide power grid.



Bézy said Solid Waste is looking at other potential inactive landfills within the County that may offer the same opportunities.

Margaret Bézy checks new micro turbine unit at Jamacha Landfill.

Improvement Challenge Replaces Good Ideas

It's a new look and fresh approach for improving DPW's processes in 2002. Following on the heels of last year's successful Good Ideas program, Improvement Challenge offers more opportunities to streamline work flow, save money and provide better customer service. The process is simple:

Each of the 20 sections in the department will come up with at least one process improvement to implement into the section's work or one that involves the section and other DPW sections. These will be developed through teamwork rather than by individual effort.

Teams have guidelines to help develop their ideas:

- ◆ Decide on a team facilitator
- ◆ Brainstorm ideas and decide what needs further review
- ◆ Discuss strengths and weaknesses or benefits and barriers to the idea
- ◆ Develop a list of tasks needed to develop the idea further
- ◆ Assign section members to gather information
- ◆ Establish a timeline
- ◆ Submit idea and plan to manager
- ◆ Meet to review information
- ◆ Prepare idea proposal for manager
- ◆ Submit proposal to manager
- ◆ When manager approves, begin implementation
- ◆ Establish timeline and who is responsible for each task
- ◆ Plan for regular reporting to manager
- ◆ Prepare a descriptive report of the idea to share with other LUEG departments after using the idea successfully

Improvement Challenge runs through the end of June.

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DPW Scores High in 2001 Survey

By Jessica Eslinger, Staff Writer

Customers are very satisfied with the Department of Public Works. According to the 2001 Countywide Customer Service Survey, DPW achieved 94 percent satisfaction among its customers. In addition, 90 percent of phone calls to DPW were positive and the department was in the top four in the County on its timely returned call rate.

Nearly 7,000 respondents completed the survey about employee promptness, courtesy, knowledge, information delivery and overall customer impressions. A majority (79 percent) of the surveys were completed in English and 21 percent were done in Spanish, the largest percentage since the survey's origination.

The Countywide Customer Service Survey was designed to improve the way county government serves its constituents in terms of quality, timeliness and value. Feedback is provided by the survey and internally through Mystery Shopper methods and Phone Shopper Surveys.

Other high scoring departments were Agriculture Weights and Measures, Human Resources and the Medical Examiner's Office. Departments that showed the greatest improvements since the last survey in 2000 were Probation (from 79 to 88 percent) and the Medical Examiner's Office (from 92 to 99 percent).

Safety

Are you a MVSP?

By Jack Thompson, Safety Officer

At some point in our career each of us may be exposed to some type of safety hazard, but the probability and resulting severity of an incident are both factors that can be controlled by proactive teamwork. Management's commitment to safety along with that of each employee is of primary importance in developing and sustaining an effective safety culture for any organization.

Management is a key player that sets the tone for safety. Managers and supervisors are required to inform employees and contractors about the extent of a project, traffic control, work hours, types of equipment that will be used, etc. along with potential safety hazards that may exist and methods to control or eliminate them.

All employees must think about our daily activities while developing a mental task-specific safety plan. We must interact with others who are affected by our work, or those whose work will affect us. There are many theories on how to manage individual safety, but the best-known method is "CYA," better known as, "Continue Your Awareness."

From the beginning of a task to the completion of the work, all parties, management, contractors, and employees must hold each other accountable for safety. The work process must be continually examined by all and changes made as needed.

Inevitably, we are all safety players, whether by virtue of actual work done or concern for the well being of the others. While written safety policies and procedures outline what is expected, it is the individuals concern for his or her well-being and the well-being of others that should be the primary trait of the safety player.

Strive to be the Most Valuable Safety Player and you'll surely enjoy a longer and healthier career.

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Training

Training Goal Met

By Karen Jacobs, Training

In an effort to reduce vehicular accidents, everyone in the Department was asked to attend a review of the defensive driving program, the Smith System. *We have achieved the goal.* Thanks to the cooperation of all staff, supervisors, and managers the December 31 goal was met. Each of us is now prepared to protect ourselves from the inconsistent and unsafe actions of other motorists.

Now when we are on the roads and are applying the Smith System, we keep ourselves safe, reduce department expenses for vehicle repair and help to keep the roads safe for our customers. Review the five keys and see how effectively you apply them.

- Aim high in steering – Check out what is happening up ahead at the point you will reach in 15 seconds. This gives you time to respond to what you see.
- Get the Big Picture – Do not get stuck behind vehicles that obstruct your view. Maintain a 4 second cushion between you and the car in front of you. Watch to see what is happening to your sides. These help you lessen the affect of unpredictable actions of others.
- Keep your eyes moving – Be careful to not fix your vision on one object and miss other relevant information.
- Leave yourself an out – By doing this you will reduce your risk of being bumped into by another vehicle.
- Make sure they see you – Help others by using the warning devises on your vehicle. Let them know when you are backing up, turning, or having problems with your vehicle. Also the friendly use of the horn may make someone aware of a potentially risky situation.

How have you been doing? A staff member reported to the Training Section that they avoided being in a pile up during foggy conditions because of the four-second cushion in front of their car. Others have remained safe in the presence of an erratic driver. Some have discussed the system with their family members. Safety is important for all of us.

Division News

Transportation

Whitlock Takes More Than Fleeting Glance at Vehicles

You may think of that truck you drive or the pool car you check out as just a means of getting from one place to another during the workday. But to DPW's Fleet Coordinator Jim Whitlock, it's a tool you use to complete your job.



In all, Whitlock's responsible for some 600 sedans and small trucks, medium duty trucks, heavy duty trucks and off-road equipment such as graders and rollers scattered throughout the department. Keeping the newest vehicles in the fleet can be a daunting task at times.

"It's like a checkers game," he said. "We have to move low-mileage vehicles where they're needed and replace worn out vehicles when it's time."

Fleet Coordinator Jim Whitlock is responsible for some 600 cars, trucks and special equipment.

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One of the areas in which the whole department can help is to keep cars and trucks clean and serviced properly. When a DPW sedan or pickup or dump truck is removed from the fleet it's sold at the County auction.

"The cleaner a vehicle is when we sell it, the more it's worth," he said. "The money we get at the auction is delivered back to us to purchase a new fleet."

Land Development

Transit, Airports Get New Homes

County Transit (CTS) and County Airports got new homes in January. Both were housed at Seville Plaza.

CTS staff moves to COC Annex at 5201 Ruffin Road. Their telephone number is still (858) 874-4001. Their fax is (858) 694-2619.

Airports returned to its former home at Gillespie Field at 1960 Joe Crosson Drive in El Cajon. The new telephone number is (619) 956-4800 and the fax is (619) 956-4801.

Both sections moved as part of the department's office reorganization.

Management Services

Tires Stack Up at Event

Goodyear, Goodrich, Bridgestone and Firestone were keywords at January's Tire Amnesty Day at Lakeside Road Station. This was the fourth such event held by DPW's Solid Waste Recycling unit in the last year.

"We collected 770 old tires," said J Taylor who coordinated the day. "Most of them were old passenger vehicle tires but we also collected some motorcycle and racing tires."

Taylor says tires collected at amnesty days are recycled for use in several ways including rubberized asphalt for roads.

Along with Taylor, DPW staff participating included George Savage and Dave Johnson of Roads. Volunteering were Liz Zellner of Environmental Health, Frank Espinoza, staff of Vector Technology and Orelia Sowter.

Free T-shirts went to those who recycled tires. Those shirts are made from recycled plastic soda bottles and recycled cotton.